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Does CIA need Bush?

Now that the smoke has begun to clear from around President Ford's dismissal of the big gun at the Defense Department, justified criticism has turned to the selection of George Bush to head the Central Intelligence Agency. Ford must deal not with the anguish of CIA critics who may want to do away with the CIA but the yet muted shock from conservatives who want the CIA preserved as an effective intelligence agency, not an aspen leaf shuddering in every political breeze.

George Will, the Washington columnist who embraces a conservative view on most issues, contends that Mr. Bush at the CIA is the wrong kind of guy at the wrong place at the worst possible time. That view will find support among Ford friends and CIA friends.

Surfacing of abuses of CIA authority by presidents and CIA executives has been healthy. Director Colby has played a responsible role in co-operating with investigative bodies and we think the Congress will insist on genuine reform. The problem now lies not so much in what the CIA will do that it shouldn't do but in not doing what it should do, present unvarnished and uninhibited intelligence to the President and others charged with the security of the nation.

A man whose claim to the job is being a fine fellow, a two-term representative and former chairman (during the Nixon regime) of the Republican Party should be challenged. The CIA needs a responsive professional as never before. Mr. Ford should produce one.